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SUBJECT: HOLLYWOOD IN TAJIKISTAN: L.A. MOVIE WORKER SEES FLEDGLING  
TAJIK FILM INDUSTRY FIRST HAND

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¶1. (U) Summary: Jon Green, a film industry worker from Los Angeles, met with local movie enthusiasts on a recent trip to Dushanbe. Green's discussions yielded insights on local culture, the effects of endemic corruption on the development of fledgling industries, and Tajiks' impressions on America and its movies. End summary.

NO "SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES" IN DUSHANBE

¶2. (U) Green met with a local film makers' organization, comprised of several artists of varying ages, at the American corner in Dushanbe. Members of the organization screen their films at Dushanbe's only cinema, but the government has recently decided to take the building for its own use. Police have ordered the group to remove their film equipment from the facility. The reason for the government takeover is unclear. The group currently has no alternative public venue for screening films.

¶3. (U) The cinema in Dushanbe screened commercial films as well as amateur projects. Most commercial films shown at the cinema came from India and China. The film makers remarked that there is hardly any market for movies in Tajikistan because people have so little money. The government does not promote the film industry in the country because it does not perceive any potential financial or cultural benefit from doing so.

WHO ARE TAJIKISTAN'S FILM MAKERS?

¶4. (U) Green noticed that the local film making community was almost evenly split between old artists-- many of whom took inspiration from Soviet-era films-- and their younger, more commercially-minded counterparts. The older film makers prefer to engage in film making as a hobby rather than as a way to earn money or expose the outside world to Tajikistan's culture. The younger ones, however, were interested to hear Green describe how movies are marketed in the United States, and expressed a desire to show their films outside Tajikistan. These young artists stated that many administrative roadblocks exist that prevent them from sending their work abroad.

¶5. (U) Young film makers expressed a particular interest in Hollywood-style themes for their movies, eschewing Tajik

cultural influences. Several times, Green asked group members why they relied on Hollywood for creative inspiration instead of seeking to promote Tajik cultural awareness through the films they produce. While some seemed receptive to this idea, most continued to indicate an affinity for Hollywood blockbusters despite expressing dismay at the violence those films often portray.

#### LOST IN TRANSLATION?

¶6. (U) Several of the group's members chided the United States for its "violent culture" as portrayed in popular Hollywood movies. They linked this violent behavior to America's "desire" to launch wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, many members expressed a liking for violent films.

¶7. (U) Green's interpreter noted that many pirated American films (which are often subtitled in Russian and widely available throughout Tajikistan) are not accurately translated. He told of a locally available version of the popular children's movie "Shrek" in which the subtitles contain numerous profanities not present in the original film.

#### REFLECTIONS

¶8. (U) Green expressed doubt that a Hollywood film could be

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filmed in Tajikistan any time soon. The same administrative roadblocks that hinder film makers from sending their work outside Tajikistan would hinder American companies from producing inside the country. Corruption and poor governance are major deterrents to such activity.

¶9. (U) Comment: The prevalence of pirated American films in Tajikistan is a clear violation of international copyright law, but the films are one of the few means by which Tajiks are able to gain regular exposure to Western culture. Green's meeting with Dushanbe's small film community offers an interesting glimpse into how some Tajiks may be primarily exposed to American cultural influences. His outreach also revealed another opportunity for engagement, through the January 2010 International Visitor multi-regional program on U.S. film production. The Public Affairs Section will nominate one of the local filmmakers to participate. End comment.  
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